

Interviewees: Malcom & Irene Collier

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Bio:

Irene Collier was born in Hoiping District, Guangdong Province, China and immigrated to the U.S., where she grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown. Malcolm Collier was born in New Mexico and lived in various states, Canada, Peru, and New Mexico until his family settled in the Bay Area. In the Fall of 1966, the Colliers enrolled at SF State, where they met in a psychology class. They joined the picket lines during the 1969-68 TWLF strike and Irene tutored in ICSA tutorial programs in Chinatown. After the strike, the Colliers were both involved with the Asian American student groups that that set up and ran the Asian American Studies Department starting in the Fall of 1969. Malcolm subsequently taught in the AAS Department for many years and Irene became a community activist, working in both non-profit and public sectors to advance the needs of Asian American children and youth.

Abstract:

00:00:00-00:10:39 Irene and Malcolm Collier discuss their upbringings; the former having been born in 1948 in a Chinese farming village, and the latter brought up in places such as New Mexico and Peru. 00:10:40-00:35:02 The couple speaks about the meeting at SF State.

Following up, they speak on the cultural differences between the two as an interracial couple in a period where interracial marriages were looked down upon. 00:35:03-01:01:01 The Colliers reflect on their respective roles, as well as the faculty's roles during the 1968/69 Third World Liberation Strike at SF State College. 01:01:02-01:25:59 The Colliers speak about the evolution of the Asian American Studies department at SF State University, emphasizing the changes made in regards to both community needs and the growth of paradigmatic academic standards.

01:26:00-01:37:02 Irene and Malcolm share how the TWLF Strike played a role into raising their children amid cultural differences, ultimately cultivating a strong sense of their cultural identities.

Transcript

00:00:00 Grace Yoo: Thank you Malcolm and Irene for participating in our oral history project. So can you all kind of talk about growing up and where you both grew up?

Irene Collier: I guess I'll start first?

Malcolm Collier: Yeah, you're slightly older.

Irene Collier: I was born in China, in Hoiping. It's one of the provinces (Guangdong), and the thing was I was born in 1948. And so, of course, that was the year (before) that the communists took over. And my father had been in the United States. And so he had gone back (there) the year before I was born with the intention that he would stay there after working in the United States. And my grandfather was here and my great grandfather was here. But, you know, every generation wanted to return home, and for various reasons. But my father left very shortly after I was born, and so I grew up in China up until the age of five. And it's a village. It's a farming village. And there are no stores around. So when people talk about farm to village, this was really farm to village. It was like your backyard and the farm to the table. There were no stores around. You had to go quite a ways to get to a store. And so whatever you ate, you had to grow. And so we were very self-sufficient up there. And my father would send back money so that he could live there, but he wanted us to come to America because it was obvious that the communists were making changes in the way landowners were perceived and the way the government was handling ex-patriots. And so he wanted us to come here.

Malcolm Collier: Plus, of course, it was the first time you guys could come because of the immigration process.

Irene Collier: Right. So anyway there's a picture of myself in the book, and there's a picture of myself at age two, and there's my mother holding my baby brother. And the thing about it is that, you know, she looks very sad in the picture because it was taken by, you know, they had photographers traveling into the villages. You didn't go somewhere to take a picture. And that's why everyone has the same clothes and the same chair we've been sitting on. Anyway, she took that picture to remember what I looked like because they were going to leave me behind in the village because they only had two visas, and I had an older brother and my baby brother. And so they were going to take the boys and leave me behind with a family who was eager to adopt me because I was such a chatty little kid. And so, you know, but she just couldn't do it. And last minute she just said, "I can't go to America." So, of course, they lose all their money that they paid for the visas and everything. And so by the time I was five, my father said, "No, you have to leave China. You cannot stay there." And so we did it again. And the next time we left, they left my older brother behind. Um, again, there's only two visas, you know, you couldn't get more. And so, we thought because he was ten years older than I was, he was 15 at the time, that they could somehow get him over on a student visa later. And, of course, you know, that was when McCarthy came on. And so that door was shut very quickly. So we grew up without my brother, my oldest brother, and he had to have other people take care of him in Hong Kong. Yeah. And so, you know, our family was very fractured. And so I grew up, you know, the first thing I came to school in America, first of all, nobody spoke the same language as we did because we spoke the village. You know, we spoke Seiyap which is, you know, Hoiping, the language of the village,

which is different from the Chinese school which taught in Cantonese. And it's very different. It's like the difference between Spanish and French. They're related languages, but they're not mutually intelligible until you really learn what the areas of commonality are. Anyway, so I grew up not speaking English and not speaking Chinese as they taught it in America. So suddenly it was like, what happened to us? We're in this place where nobody talks like us. And so, you know, it was really hard. And I came from a village where I was the darling of the village. I would be singing from the rooftops, and I was really chatty. But once I got to America, because it was sink or swim in English, you were not allowed to speak in Chinese. I didn't speak for years. And even as a college student, I didn't speak up. I found it very hard to speak unless I could speak perfectly. And so throughout my elementary school, um, and high school, I really was really quiet. And, you know, I had lots of thoughts and lots of burning passions, but I couldn't get it out. And it wasn't until I think after college that I became a terror. Somebody like Malcolm can talk about his childhood.

00:06:35 Malcolm Collier: Mine is complex in its own way. Born in New Mexico. And that was kind of the home base, but as I used to explain to my classes, my first five years were in New Mexico, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, Canada, where we were for two years in Nova Scotia and New Mexico, New York. And then we went to Latin America, and I actually started my schooling in the Sierra in Peru, and it was called the Callejón de Huaylas, just under these big 22,000-foot mountains. And then we came back. And we're back in New Mexico. That's where I started the American schooling system in second grade, but it was not the typical schools of America, it was a school in Talpa, New Mexico. Just about all the students except me came from homes where the first language was Spanish, but they're not immigrants. These are communities that were conquered, taken over by the United States in the 19th century and all of the teachers were local Spanish speaking teachers, but the school was totally in English. If we saw Mr. Gonzalez out in the community, you probably speak to him in Spanish, but at school it was in English. And my parents were trying to be not moving around as much because they had been making their living as photographers. And I was at school age, my brothers, younger brothers, are getting up to school age. They wanted to be settled, and then especially to make your living as a freelance photographer a long ways away from all the markets was rather difficult. Anyway, they were, we were going broke as a family in New Mexico, and my father had these long time connections to the Bay Area because his family had come to the Bay Area in 1919, and he had grown up with a split back and forth between New Mexico and the Bay Area. So he had lots of connections here. And so we came out here. He had a temporary part time job at the San Francisco Art Institute, and was told by colleagues of his, "You should take it because it may lead to something." And so we came out here. With the coast in Marin, the outer coast, which in those days was not like it is today. It was inhabited by, uh, Portuguese ranchers from the Azores and stray longshoremen, carpenters and other folks who couldn't afford to live anyplace else. Which included us. Today, as in the country song, it's filled up with doctors and lawyers and such. So I ended up, uh, completing. I went to what would be considered middle school and high school in Marin County. Eventually came here to San Francisco State where, in fact, my father was by then teaching, even though he had never finished grade school. He had gotten jobs in the, over here in the Frederic Burke Education Unit and also in the Anthropology department, teaching various things related to the use of photography, but also issues related with cross-cultural education. But I came here because I knew they couldn't afford to send me anywhere else. And besides, I really was not interested in the other places. And we met. And according to her, in the first day, in reality, about two months later, we were in the same class.

00:10:40 Irene Collier: But I never spoke to him.

Grace Yoo: Oh my goodness. So, so what high school did you go to Malcolm?

Malcolm Collier: Tamalpais.

Grace Yoo: Okay, great. What high school did you-?

Irene Collier: Galileo.

Grace Yoo: Okay, great. And so you're in a psychology class here.

Irene Collier: Here, at San Francisco State. Yeah. He had a scholarship to go anywhere in California, and he came to San Francisco State. So to the students, it's a good school.

Grace Yoo: And so you're in the psychology class, and you talk about it in the book. He was kind of soft-spoken and...

Irene Collier: Right. And you know, except for teachers, I had never really talked to a white person, you know, because I lived in Chinatown. And you know, you just, you really didn't want to cross Broadway Street. You knew you could go to Washington Square. It was there, and it had grass, but you knew it was really for the Italians. You knew it wasn't for us. And so today, when I see Chinese ladies exercising and doing sword dancing and fans and everything is just like things have changed.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. Where did you live in Chinatown? Where were you?

Irene Collier: I lived in Stockton and Pacific, but before we lived there, we lived in a residential hotel. Now, for those students who don't know what a residential hotel is, it's a set of rooms. And you don't have a bathroom to yourself. You have to share the bathroom. One bathroom with the entire floor. There are no showers and you don't have a kitchen. And each room might have a sink, but that is it. And so, a family, usually families, live in one room about the size of

Malcolm Collier: About from here to there.

Irene Collier: Yeah. You know, people are stacked up and all their possessions of they are there and uh, you know, we lived in a residential hotel first and then we moved to Stockton and Pacific where, you know, my father had connections with people, and they were able to get us a studio apartment there. And that's where I grew up. So I grew up in Chinatown. I went to Chinatown schools. You know, all of our classmates were Chinese. Maybe 1 or 2 were part Chinese. But, you know, I really didn't have any association with, you know, white people. And then I met him.

Grace Yoo: You were in class. I mean, can you talk about how you all kind of met in psychology?

Malcolm Collier: Well, I mean, the teacher. What was her first name? Anyway, Beatty..

Irene Collier: Yeah.

Malcolm Collier: .. you know had a thing where people were supposed to meet other people in the class. And so you had to set up to talk to people as part of an exercise. She didn't actually do encounter groups, a lot of the other psych people did.

Grace Yoo: So it was kind of like a pair of share. She wanted, you know. And so you were in the same pair, you were paired?

Malcolm Collier: Well, you know, you had, you had to choose somebody. So I decided to ask her.

Irene Collier: So I said, "Oh okay."

Grace Yoo: So why did you choose Irene?

Malcolm Collier: I mean, that's she's been asking me that a lot. Yeah. My answer is why not?

Irene Collier: Yeah, I mean, I was all set to talk to the other Chinese students since we all hung out together. It was like, oh, this is easy.

Grace Yoo: So it was the semester in this class where you had to see each other...

Malcolm Collier: And understand in those days, the semester started later that it does now. And you had a big break at Christmas and the semester ended after Christmas.

Grace Yoo: Oh, okay. Okay.

Malcolm Collier: So there was a split there. So that would have been November. So you know..

Grace Yoo: So you didn't get to know each other in this class right? It was the next class?

Irene Collier: No it was this class.

Grace Yoo: Okay.

Irene Collier: So we started talking and then it was like, you know, there were some common concerns because he was very concerned about bilingual education, and I had always felt that, you know, we really lost our language being in America. And because both parents worked and they worked 12 hours a day, we hardly ever saw them except for meal times. And we're only five at the time. I don't know how we didn't. Well, we got into a lot of trouble. But I won't tell you little stories of running through the streets of Chinatown. Being scolded by everybody. All the things that we did as my brother and myself. I was five, he was four. We got into a lot of trouble. Anyway, they had to work. That was no way around. She was a seamstress, and my father worked in various stores, and so they didn't have time for us. And so, you know, it's like a lot of people my age, we could only speak "Kitchen Cantonese" we call it, you know, you have a very limited vocabulary. But our parents and my mother couldn't speak English,

00:16:09 Malcolm Collier: And even she really didn't speak Cantonese either...

Irene Collier: So, you know, yeah. But anyway, we just spoke the, you know, our dialect. And my father, of course, he could speak. He could speak some English because he had been in America for a while, but he didn't speak to us. We only spoke Chinese at home. So, you know, it.

Malcolm Collier: Well, you see, when you're asking about a meeting, it's one of the relatively early things I asked her was about language, because I was a little puzzled. On the campus, the Chinese students always spoke to each other in English, whereas in New Mexico, in those days, the people both in the Spanish speaking community, the Tiwa community, the Pueblo community that my family had close associations with, everybody spoke in their own languages in public.

There was no hesitation. But here, nobody at the campus, what's going on? So I did actually ask very early on what they spoke at home, which I think impressed her.

Grace Yoo: Oh, okay.

Irene Collier: And so, you know, it was like the first time that I started thinking about a lot of issues like that. The why did we have to give up our language? Why do we have to give up, you know, respect for our parents? We had teachers in school that denigrated our parents and you know, and so, you know, it was something that was kind of welling inside, but you couldn't express it because we were so pushed to succeed in school. So we learned how to do footnotes, and we learned how to read all the Western classics and, you know, read all kinds of things from world literature. But we never read anything by anybody Chinese. And you know, and at that point,

Malcolm Collier: Talk about Gail in history class.

Irene Collier: Yeah. Well, I have a friend of mine, Gail. She was a high school teacher.

Malcolm Collier: Later.

Irene Collier: Later. But at the time, we were both students here in the history class, and it was the history of immigration. And we were learning about all the European immigrants, the Irish, the Italians and all these people, you know, Jewish people. And she finally just raised her hand. She said, "Well what about the Chinese?" And the professor here said, "Well, Chinese people are only 3% of the population, so they are statistically irrelevant." And so she just walked out of the class. I wasn't as brave, but I really admired her for that.

Malcolm Collier: And he was a nationally recognized historian.

Irene Collier: Yeah. And so here is a professor who was a specialist in immigration and considered us statistically irrelevant. Wow. And so, you know, things like that happened in high school, too. And he wasn't the only one. And I think he was a good person. Good professor, but not knowledgeable. And so, you know, all these issues, you know, were brought up to the fore because there was a lot of concerns in those days about poverty and doing things for the country. And so, you know, but we couldn't see a pathway to that. And for us in Chinatown, you know, if you were a girl, there were only a few options open to you. So you could be a nurse, you could be a secretary, you could be a teacher. So I said mm, I don't like needles, so nursing's out. I'm bad at math, so accounting was out, you know. And so maybe I'll teach. And actually, you know, many of us in my generation became teachers. Those of us who did well in school. But then we were also one of the most passionate fighters for bilingual education. So that was how it evolved. But anyway, in talking to him, I found that we really had some very basic things in common. And so because he had grown up in Taos in New Mexico with Spanish Americans and he sheep herded with his best friend, you know as a child and had very deep connections with Taos Pueblo, you know, he understood a lot of the struggles that we were going through. And it was not unlike what we're going through here. And it was across the United States. People were searching like, where do I fit? The melting pot doesn't really want to melt, you know? So it was, we had some very good discussions. And so...

00:21:54 Malcolm Collier: I had a head start on some of these discussions, because I came from a family where these sorts of things had been discussed, actually for a couple generations. And so

that was familiar to talk about these as issues, issues of acculturation, assimilation, bilingualism, more familiar subjects.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. Was racism talked..?

Malcolm Collier: Of course, that's part.

Grace Yoo: So there was a language variety to...

Malcolm Collier: The communities there, you know, did have a history of conscious concern about these things. I mean, it's not generally known, I think, even today, but the state of New Mexico, in many respects always operated legally as a bilingual state. And... if you're looking at political power and stuff. New Mexico has had a very high number of elected officials who were coming from the Spanish-speaking communities. And at the same time one of the other major groups, different tribes, there was also a very long history of very upfront outspoken, you know, actions. I had come out of that kind of environment. Right. And so to talk about it was not new, you know.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. So you met in class then what? When did you all start dating?

Malcolm Collier: Gradually.

Irene Collier: We were friends first. And you know, honestly, I knew the implications of being involved with someone other than Chinese was going to be very difficult. So I kind of thought it and didn't want the relationship in many ways. I knew that, you know, you didn't cross racial lines in those days. You didn't even cross, like, you know, even marrying a Japanese, a Chinese marrying a Japanese,

Malcolm Collier: Especially Japanese.

Irene Collier: Oh yeah. Chinese marrying Koreans, Chinese marrying other Asians was not accepted. I mean, that was a big, you know, threshold to cross. So...

Grace Yoo: Were you worried about reaction from family? What was?

Irene Collier: Yeah, I think it was really, really hard. And I knew that if we were to be involved, that my parents would have to bear the brunt of it. You know, my mother would have to face all the people in her sewing shop, and it was seen as a failure, you know, and, you know, my father, because he was very active in the family associations, he would have to say my daughter married out. And that was a disgrace. And they both would have to carry that burden. And, um, you know, parents, in those days, they worked very hard. And it was the success of their children was their success. So to have someone marry out was seen as like, oh

00:25:18 Malcolm Collier: Also, your dad, having been here in the 1930s and experienced, in some respects, the peak discrimination and stuff. And so he really didn't like white people. With good reason.

Irene Collier: So, you know, it was hard and it was hard with my friends, too, because, you know, we were involved in Chinese community, we were involved in tutoring. We were involved in, some of them were involved in a lot of the anti-poverty programs. And, you know, just the beginning of things. And so there was an ethnic awareness that we owed something to our

community. And here I am, you know, seeing someone outside of the community. So it was, it was hard for him, too. It's hard for me.

Malcolm Collier: But I think it was easier for me for not just for the obvious reasons, but also because I had spent most of my life being frequently the one and only Anglo kid in the whole community, in the whole school, things like that. So I was used to being the odd person out.

Grace Yoo: How about your family though, with you?

Malcolm Collier: I think their biggest concern was they thought she didn't talk.

Irene Collier: Too quiet!

Grace Yoo: So they didn't have fear of, sort of like,

Malcolm Collier: Our marriage, I don't think was particularly an issue. But there was concern about other things. When we actually did finally get married, my father asked Jim Hirabayashi, "Does she ever talk?"

Irene Collier: Little did they know that later on, no one could shut me out.

Grace Yoo: So your family was okay. You knew that they weren't worried about that.

Malcolm Collier: Not at that level.

Grace Yoo: But did you also sense, like did you sense the tension that Irene faced from other Asian Americans?

Malcolm Collier: I knew it was going to be there.

Grace Yoo: You knew it was going to be there.

Malcolm Collier: But I mean, it's complicated because even by the next semester, I was meeting people. I knew Laureen (Chew), um, I was meeting most of the.. I'd already, by within a couple of semesters, met most of the folks were involved in the strike.

Grace Yoo: Yeah, well, it was an interesting time because other folks have mentioned this, too, because it's the streams of ethnic consciousness. Right. And kind of pride and, you know, and at the same time, if folks are mixed or, you know, in a relationship with someone of a different race, that tension, we've heard that actually.

Irene Collier: And it's different now, you know, and later on, my mother, much later in her life, she says she couldn't find anybody to marry her, so she married a white guy!

Grace Yoo: So how many years were you dating before you told your mom and dad?

Irene Collier: Like, almost five years? Four years? It's just like... I was always conflicted about it... Even up to the point where we were going to get married. Should I really be doing this?

Grace Yoo: And how did you also navigate, you know, as people are having this increasing ethnic consciousness, racial consciousness, but this pride, like, you know, the Yellow Power Movement. How did you navigate that too?

Irene Collier: It was really hard because, you know, a lot of my friends. You sure you really want to do this? You know?

Malcolm Collier: But to be fair, I mean, everybody talks about it as the interracial thing, but the really big thing in the long run is, is culture. And the degree to which people can adapt to the differences and the cultural expectations. So there's a lot of very legitimate concerns.

Irene Collier: Because, you know, like the few people that we did know who married out, you know, many of their marriages were very troubled. And a lot of it is because, you know, when you're young and in love, you think we can do this! But then, you know, food comes along. What do you eat? You raise children. How do you raise them? If there's a language you want them to have, do you do that? And how do you spend your weekends? And it's, you know, it was very hard in the people that we saw marry out. A lot of times it didn't work out. And so, but I think...

00:30:05 Malcolm Collier: But at the same time, I mean, there's a difference in perception in terms of us, two of us going into marriage versus mine. I knew people in my parents' generation that were married out, you know. So that puts a different perspective. Even when they may or may not have worked, it's still it's not like it's totally new.

Irene Collier: And I have to say it wasn't easy. There were many times when I thought, "Oh my God, what did I get myself into?" And we had to give in a lot

Malcolm Collier: And to be very specific. You know, I mean after we were married and I took her back to New Mexico and stuff, she did fine. And she was comfortable with people in the Spanish speaking community in the Pueblo and stuff. That was not a source of problem. It was dealing with the, for lack of a better word, is the ego centered character, white Anglo American cultural behavior.

Irene Collier: Yeah, that was the hardest part.

Grace Yoo: How long were you both in New Mexico for?

Malcolm Collier: We go back and forth all the time. And then you know, what several years after the strike I was drafted. And then we spent a year in Arizona working that out, at a school on the Navajo reservation. I had spent time on the reservation, too, as a child.

Irene Collier: But, you know, some of the people that we met there, the Navajo people became some of our best friends. But not too many white people became our best friends.

Grace Yoo: Oh my goodness. So at State, what organizations were you both involved in?

Irene Collier: Well, originally there were, the strongest organization on campus was the Chinese CSIO. I've forgotten what it was...

Malcolm Collier: Chinese Scholastic...

Irene Collier: No no, that's ICSA (Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action)

Malcolm Collier: No no, it's Chinese.. I...

Irene Collier: Students for...

Malcolm Collier: Intercollegiate Chinese...

Irene Collier: Something, something or other. Anyway, it was a very social group, very nice people. And they organized dances. And what they did was they donated the proceeds to community events, but

Malcolm Collier: They were mainly just social.

Irene Collier: Yeah, they were mostly a social organization. And I, you know, I liked them, but I wanted something more because, you know, just looking back on how hard my mother had to work as a seamstress and what condition our community was in. You know, we had a lot of gang violence and a lot of, you know, just the flood of immigrants. And so, you know, I just saw a pressing need for us to do something more. Although, you know, they're really nice people and their intentions were really good, I felt I needed something more. And so when Laureen (Chew) asked me to tutor for ICSA, which is the group that was involved with the strike, we began tutoring, and but also in high school, I tutored a lot at the local high, and I did a lot of community work as a high school student. But here at the college level here was an organization that organized it. And so they were very involved. And then they were the group that became involved with the strike. And so, you know, but anyway,

Malcolm Collier: I didn't belong to any organizations.

Grace Yoo: Oh, you didn't belong to any?

Irene Collier: But he was in track.

Malcolm Collier: For one year, the first year, I ran cross country. But I was good at that.

Grace Yoo: So you were doing tutoring and then, What was your major, Malcolm?

Malcolm Collier: Anthropology.

Grace Yoo: Anthropology and your major?

Irene Collier: You know, like, I was lost. I didn't know what my major would be.

Grace Yoo: Okay. And were you just hanging out with Irene?

Malcolm Collier: We hung out at that library with a lot of folks who were actually in a social group. That's that first year. Yeah, but subsequently even more involved with the people in the ICSA. But actually in terms of organizations, the organization... So I was actually might have been being pulled in the direction of Latino students organizations because I had friends in those groups because of background.

Irene Collier: And you spoke Spanish.

Malcolm Collier: I spoke Spanish.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. And so what year was this?

Malcolm Collier: We started here in the Fall of '66.

Grace Yoo: And so at what point did you get involved in the activism? What year was it?

00:35:03 Malcolm Collier: Well, all of that stuff built up slowly. ICSA wasn't even formed until '67. In the Spring of '68, they had a sit in, a big series of sit ins. So it was building up gradually.

Grace Yoo: And so when did you enter? What part were you like, “Oh, I'm going to go to the protest,” or I'm going to, you know, they're talking about this, I'm interested in this.

Malcolm Collier: I think Irene was being careful because for immigration status.

Irene Collier: Yeah. Because, yeah. You know, we had gotten our citizenship and like many Chinese Americans, 90% of us did it illegally. And so even the immigration officer said, you know, we had to go in and confess our sin. So we were part of the confession program in 19...

Malcolm Collier: And not terribly voluntarily, somebody informed.

Irene Collier: Yeah. But anyway, so we had to, you know, talk about our actual entrance and our actual identity. And so they took away my citizenship. So my status was very iffy because if they had to deport me, where would they deport me to? So there was no country. China was not...

Malcolm Collier: Let's keep in mind, under international law, you can only deport or you can assist in being deported to your country or a birth. But what if the country doesn't exist? China did not exist.

Irene Collier: The United States did not recognize China. So where was I? You know, and similar to what is happening today, you know, people who are deported for various crimes and whatever.

Malcolm Collier: Insane reasons.

Irene Collier: And for various reasons, they're deported to places they've never been.

Grace Yoo: So you knew that in the back of your mind if you were involved in something.

Irene Collier: So I had to be very careful. But, you know, when they threw up the picket line, both of us joined the picket line. And, of course, I continued to do tutoring and things in the community that I thought were important. So, you know, at that point, neither of us was, were involved in the actual, you know, Third World Liberation Front.

Malcolm Collier: She was involved with ICSA, but off campus.

Irene Collier: So and then, you know, other people were more involved in the central thing we supported. We walk the picket line every day. It rained a lot. So that was not fun! It was cold and so.

Malcolm Collier: I mean, it was a big picket line.

Irene Collier: Yeah, it was. Yeah. But, you know, I think, you know...

Grace Yoo: Were you there in January, I think, I don't know exactly date it was...

Malcolm Collier: She wasn't, I was.

Grace Yoo: ... with the mass arrests.

Malcolm Collier: I got missed being arrested, probably by about six feet.

Irene Collier: So I was home that day and I was sick.

Grace Yoo: And you were there, Malcolm. Can you describe what that was like?

Malcolm Collier: It was just very chaotic. Some friends of ours who were ex-Marines, were vets, witnessed it. And they told me afterwards, they said when they looked up the arrangement of the police, they knew this was going to be different because they said they've shut off all the exit points.

Irene Collier: And so a lot of people got swept up in it who were just walking by. So, you know, and I think it's always glamorized, that part. The strike. Yeah, it's called "The Strike." But it's actually only a very small part of what happens.

Malcolm Collier: So we have a problem, I think in terms of how, what are the ways to address whatever the pressing need at the moment is. And the thing with the strike is I think we would agree it was necessary. But at the same time, there were a lot of unpleasant things about it, and some people got all wrapped up in the action of the strikes and so, because when you're doing action and you have things like that, you feel at least at that moment you are doing something. Whereas a lot of other type of activity that may be as very important in the long run doesn't provide that kind of, shall we say, adrenaline boost. Some people, some people become junkies to that kind of high, those demonstrations and strikes. And I'm not sure that's at all productive even when these things are necessary.

00:40:02 Grace Yoo: Also, too, in terms of, you know, the BSU (Black Student Union) into the Black consciousness that was emerging at that time period. How did that impact you? Impact you both? Or did it have an impact?

Irene Collier: Well, I think, you know, they were vocal. And they expressed all the concerns that we had. And they were bold. I don't know if we could have been the fore, you know the, the face of the movement. And I think, you know, good for them that they were brave enough to do it. But also like you know the work that had to be done. It was done by a lot of different people. And so you know in any organization, any movement you need so many different types of people. You need the front people, but you also need, you know, the nuts and bolts because, and like when people see the march on Washington, they see the march. It's, you know, but all these people underneath had to arrange where are they going to sleep, where are they going to eat, you know, how are they going to get there,

Malcolm Collier: What's going to be the order of presentations...

Irene Collier: And how do you get bathrooms enough for all those people. You know, somebody had to work on all those logistics. And in any movement, people just see, you know, the stunning, the star images and they don't see the details.

Grace Yoo: Can you talk about the details of the strike that you feel like...?

Malcolm Collier: But the thing is, of course, neither of us were involved at that point, you know, we're involved in the strike as just another person on a picket line.

Grace Yoo: Right, rank and file.

Malcolm Collier: We would talk a lot. I mean, I spent a lot of time talking to people like Mason and so forth, but in terms of having any hand in making decisions, strategy, not part of that.

Irene Collier: Yeah. But later on in developing the studies, I think that's where we really spent hours.

Grace Yoo: Can you talk about that and...?

Malcolm Collier: Well, let me come back to your question. You know, for someone like myself, um, a lot of the things that were coming out with the Black nationalists and so forth was not new. In fact, I felt that the Black community was kind of behind on that because those were issues that have been talked about for generations in the Southwest. The whole idea of self-determination, those were words I hear growing up coming out of Indian communities and also out of the Spanish-speaking, I mean, people were very culturally self-conscious. So for me, I don't think the whole thing was that it had much impact on my perspective on things, although I don't, it's not ironic, but coincidentally, and I didn't even know this at the time, my parents and especially my mother actually have connections with various folks in the civil rights movement in the 1940s because she was a member of the Society of Friends. And so people like Bayard Rustin were family friends. She knew a lot of the major art figures in Washington, D.C., they were friends with, you know, various folks. She took pictures of Thurgood Marshall for the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) as the integrated drive. She, you know, I mean she knew about that. In fact, later on when I visited the Smithsonian, they have the lunch counter for the sit-ins, she started laughing. She says, "I at the first sit-in." She said, "We had sit-ins in Washington D.C. in 1943." And she said, "We were ahead of our time." She said, "All we succeeded in doing was changing the lunch counter from all white to all black."

Grace Yoo: Wow.

Malcolm Collier: So my perspectives are coming to a very different from most other folks. But anyway, going forward.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. So then, okay, so then there's the strike and then... So can you talk about sort of what points you feel like you, you know... It sounds like more kind of the, after the strike.

Malcolm Collier: Well I think the strike was very, very important, I think, for both of us and having a realization of how complicated these kind of processes can be and how easily they can go off the rails. The dangers of chaos up front. Actually, you know, a family friend of my parents talked about demonstrates, as he says, "A crowd has the mentality of a three-year-old. And that's why it goes back again to what Irene was talking about, what's underneath, what's not visible, and what is really important. Because it's that foundation for whatever the action is, is what's going to keep it from being just chaos that doesn't produce anything. So I think the strike was very educational,

00:45:28 Irene Collier: And I think people have to understand the role of the faculty strike in this. I think that's not talked about talked about very much. The strike would have failed if the faculty didn't also strike. And I have to say, some of the faculty strike to support the students, but some of them struck because they wanted...

Malcolm Collier: Other things.

Grace Yoo: Oh really?

Malcolm Collier: Yeah.

Grace Yoo: Oh, so they did strike because they wanted other things.

Irene Collier: They wanted a raise.

Grace Yoo: Oh, okay.

Irene Collier: So it was beneficial.

Malcolm Collier: They were trying to build a union movement.

Grace Yoo: Oh, so that's, we talked about labor being involved.

Irene Collier: Yeah. So it was like, it's not all that altruistic, right?

Grace Yoo: Yeah, they're trying to build up their movements.

Irene Collier: And we heard statements from some of the faculty who were involved in that, you know, they didn't really respect the students, but they saw it as an opportunity with their own interests. So...

Malcolm Collier: Which was true of a lot of other people, too. Yeah.

Grace Yoo: Can you talk about, like, who were the other folks?

Malcolm Collier: Oh, you know, Joe Alioto and Reagan, they used it for their purposes.

Irene Collier: And of course, you know, Hayakawa.

Malcolm Collier: Hayakawa was there for his purposes. Everybody had their fingers in.

Irene Collier: Yeah. So it wasn't as pure as you know, some of the...

Malcolm Collier: But some of the things that happened, actually, because of the pressure, not just of the union, but of the academic Senate in the Fall are very, very interesting because I think they have major impact in ways that I'm not sure everybody really thinks about. This is before Hayakawa became president. And with the pressure from the faculty they had all these colloquiums. Of course the big ones were in the big theater but they also had people meet around all around the campus. And so the Third World Liberation Front would send representatives to meet with this department and that department, this school and that school and to explain and push forward their positions. So you had people like Penny Nakatsu going around. It was a big part of that. So everybody had to learn how to explain what they were doing, what the goals were, what the purpose was. Not only as speakers in front of a big crowd, but to even smaller groups to put the put the positions forward. I think that the importance of that has been underestimated because if they hadn't done that, then the strike would not have had the kind of support it would do.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. So they were going to different entities and speaking.

Malcolm Collier: And then of course, they were also doing that off campus with community.

Grace Yoo: Right. Right. And I was curious, your father also worked on campus at the same time.

Malcolm Collier: Yeah, although it was it actually ended up a large part of the period he was not here. He was in Alaska. So he went, you know, film study doing this great cross-cultural education

Grace Yoo: During the strike. Okay. Okay. Because we had also heard of faculty getting fired during the strike.

Malcolm Collier: Yes, some people were. So keep in mind that that's a longer term pattern. And because there had been faculty actions in the '50s where people had been fired for political actions and views. So it was an ongoing issue. Yeah.

Irene Collier: And much later, too. So, yeah. People used it against them. So it was not so clean.

Grace Yoo: Yeah, right. So then we, you know, the strike culminates in March. Can you talk about, because you both have been saying about sort of that work after the strike, can you talk about sort of your roles after the strike and what you were involved in?

Irene Collier: Well, I think after the strike, I think you know, for me, it was redoubling the efforts in the community. You know, just doing more things in the community. And that was tutoring five nights a week there. You know, and so, you know, just seeing all the problems and issues that people were facing. You know, our community had swelled and we didn't have too many social services to assist them. And so, you know, that was what I was doing. But Malcolm participated in the planning group.

Malcolm Collier: Well, strictly speaking, so did you. You were involved with the Chinese planning, but the...

00:50:06 Grace Yoo: Can you talk about how you got recruited to be part of the planning group?

Malcolm Collier: You know, I'm not even quite sure, quite how this happened.

Grace Yoo: They said, "Hey, he volunteered, stick him in."

Malcolm Collier: I mean, you know, at some point in the summer after this, after the end of the strike, I don't know if it was Irene or some of the other folks had me pulled into George Woo's weekly, whatever you want to call it, meetings at his house in North Beach, which is where a lot of the discussions from the Chinese ICSA Chinese group was taking place. And so when the classes were, and I started being part of those discussions, I guess for the end of July, early August. I mean, there were so many other interesting things happening away from campus that summer, too. But the, so when the semester started, they had a class which either met just a kitty corner over here at one floor down, officially a class that was run by Jim Hirabayashi and that was called something like Asian American Curriculum Development. But what it really was, it was the body that ran the department. And you had representatives on it from each of the three student groups and... Why am I blocking out her name?

Grace Yoo: Penny?

Malcolm Collier: Not Penny... Dorothy Yee signed me up for that class for whatever reason. And so I show up. There we are.

Irene Collier: And the thing is that he wasn't totally accepted, you know? I mean, yeah, you know, there were people from other groups who...

Malcolm Collier: Didn't know me.

Irene Collier: Who is this guy, you know?

Malcolm Collier: Penny had met me, some of the Filipinos had met, but a lot of the people outside of the Chinese group had never met me before.

Irene Collier: So I think Jim Hirabayashi, who had known Malcolm. And Jim, Jim is an anthropologist, right? So he knew Malcolm's father. So he vouched for him. And George Woo also stuck up for Malcolm, said he's going to be valuable because of his perspectives. And so people did vouch for him. And, you know, it wasn't an easy acceptance. Because here is Ethnic Studies, and then you have, you know somebody, you know, who was considered an outsider participate in many of the decision making. But I do have to say that at that point, you know, conceptually, for the Chinese section, it was brilliant in what people were trying to do. First of all, we had some community historians, you know, Phil Choi and Him Mark Lai, and they, you know, Phil was an architect and Him Mark Lai was...

Malcolm Collier: Engineer.

Irene Collier: An engineer for Bechtel. But they had done a lot of the legwork in Chinese American history. They went through logs of newspaper articles, and they had a pretty good grasp of it.

Malcolm Collier: And you had folks like that like, well what's his name? That guy really young in the JA (Japanese American) community...

Grace Yoo: Paul Yamazaki talks about someone...

Malcolm Collier: No no... Anyway, there was some people like that in the JA (Japanese American) group, too. Less so than the Filipino group. But so there were people that could provide some content and structure. Alan Wong was the head of the campus Y (YMCA) that first year, and she (Irene) actually worked for Alan, theoretically working on Y stuff but in fact, Alan had her doing Chinese American history.

Grace Yoo: Was Alan, like, a staff member on campus?

Malcolm Collier: He was an employee of the church. So it's the college YMCA.

Irene Collier: Because what they had was they have a hangout for students. So, you know, the Y provided, it's like a chaplain service

Grace Yoo: Yeah, own in Chinatown...

Irene Collier: On campus.

Malcolm Collier: It was on campus.

Irene Collier: And so when he was hired, you know, he was the first probably non-white person to be hired to be a campus coordinator, you know, for basically a Christian service for the students to help students to organize activities for students.

Malcolm Collier: Theoretically.

Irene Collier: Yeah, theoretically.

Grace Yoo: But in his role, it sounds like he was trying to use his time to make sure that Ethnic Studies was

Irene Collier: Yeah, and he reached out to the Asian American and so, you know. Yeah. So anyway, you know...

Grace Yoo: So would you say Alan Wong was pretty, a key, a key figure?

00:55:08 Malcolm Collier: He's really key for some other reasons that are not so much related to campus. Because he, Larry Jack Wong, who was the other person? Anyway, in the late '60s, when they were starting the War on Poverty, Chinatown was left out. And it was Alan Wong and Larry Jack Wong and some other folks who went on to harass the feds and took them on tours of Chinatown and showed them films and pictures and stuff, and convinced them that hey, Chinatown has poverty, too. And so his really big and important thing is not so much at State, it's in the community.

Irene Collier: And also, he spoke out about the gangs and about gang violence in our community and that, you know, people were shocked

Malcolm Collier: And he used his church connections to work across different groups, including into the Black community.

Irene Collier: And at that time, threats were made upon his life. And it was Dianne Feinstein who offered him refuge in her home. So it was like that. It was that serious that...

Grace Yoo: Well, we've been reading about, you know, Chinatown Rising talked about Fong Torres and his brother.

Irene Collier: That was later.

Malcolm Collier: A couple years later.

Irene Collier: And so, you know, at that time, people were ducking their heads and saying that we take care of our own in Chinatown, we don't need social services, we don't need any of this. And a lot of people didn't want the, you know, exposure of Chinatown poverty to outsiders because they wanted to control, you know, the funds that were coming in and all of that. And so it was...

Malcolm Collier: And also the long history of anti-Chinese movement, immigration restrictions and all that meant that the default mode is don't let anybody know who we are, what we're doing.

Irene Collier: But at that time, you know, Alan Wong and a lot of the social workers were the first ones to say, "Open it up, tell everybody."

Malcolm Collier: And of course, George Woo was coming at that from the gang end.

Irene Collier: And that was really brave of him. You know, people really don't understand how much he risked his life. You know because people saw him as a gang member, leader, the father of the gangs. But he wasn't. He was just a spokesperson for them because they could, you know, they didn't feel like they could speak.

Malcolm Collier: Articulate.

Grace Yoo: Although during the strike, did the TWLF reach out to George and say...

Malcolm Collier: George was already part of the picture.

Grace Yoo: Oh, he was already part of the picture. Okay, okay.

Irene Collier: So anyway, but I think, you know, George is very modest, and he will never...

Grace Yoo: And we interviewed him two years ago. We're going to go back to interview, and I need to take a look at the video. We're going to take a look at it

Irene Collier: Because...

Malcolm Collier: I mean, if I mean, if we haven't really talked about we're still exploring after the strike, right. If we were to name two people that made not just Asian American Studies possible at last but made it possible for the college to endure. It's going to be Jim Hirabayashi and George Woo.

Irene Collier: But you have to understand that, you know, the brilliance of that first year, the program that they put together. Because for many of us, you know, the driving force was the language. We had lost the language. And many of us, we could be competent in English, but we didn't have the Cantonese vocabulary to enable us to be good social workers or good teachers or good anything in the community. We could speak limited Cantonese. Our English was good, but we needed to be bilingual. So language was the driving force, and it occupied a big chunk of the first set of Chinese American classes. But I mean, you know, that's one.

Grace Yoo: And what language was it? Cantonese? Hoisan?

Irene Collier: It was Cantonese. Yeah.

Malcolm Collier: Saiyap was considered...

Irene Collier: Yeah, not even a language, but anyway, you know, another one was the history class, which was taught by Phil Choi or Him Mark Lai. They would alternate or sometimes they would team teach. And in the, in that class, we learned about things that our parents had been talking about when, you know, and like my father, you know, as I was growing up, he would talk about them, *muk uk* - the wooden house. And he always talked about it with, you know, anger. And I never knew what the wooden house was, you know, he talked about. And so then we find out in Phil's class things that we had just heard whispered at home or in the community. We found out that the *muk uk* was the wooden house, the jail on Angel Island in which they were all incarcerated, including my father, he was incarcerated there. And so, you know, suddenly things made sense that, you know, even our parents didn't want to talk about. And, of course, our parents wanted to shield us, you know, so that we could not have the burden of the discrimination that they felt and that we could be free of that in this country, you know. But, you know, suddenly we found out that no, you know, they had a lot of legitimate gripes and a lot of legitimate, you know, suffering that...

01:01:02 Grace Yoo: Did you actually take the class from Phil?

Irene Collier: I took the class from Phil and...

Grace Yoo: It sort of just increased your sort of consciousness of mind?

Malcolm Collier: Well, also, Phil was very smart. He put the class to work doing more research.

Irene Collier: And we had to go up and read things on microfiche, you know, and we copy down every reference to...

Malcolm Collier: An entire card catalog of the library, trying to find anything that had any information on the Chinese-Americans.

Grace Yoo: What did you find?

Malcolm Collier: Not very much, but you had to go through.

Grace Yoo: And that was the assignment in every week?

Malcolm Collier: Yeah. Each person would spend a certain amount of time.

Grace Yoo: Everyone here doesn't know how to catalog. Now you have the OneSearch.

Malcolm Collier: And it all went back to information... So I went back and Phil had it all in the index cards and then you could.

Irene Collier: And, you know, it was going through the newspapers of the day. You know. And so then you find bits and pieces that.

Grace Yoo: And then you were looking at old newspapers, tombstones, pictures.

Irene Collier: Yeah. Just mostly old newspapers.

Grace Yoo: Was it microfiche then, or was you were looking at the full paper?

Irene Collier: No, no. Microfiche. So you had to turn.

Malcolm Collier: It's actually the roll on microfilm.

Irene Collier: Oh, microfilm. Even before microfiche.

Grace Yoo: Yeah. Uh, so in a way, you were also kind of creating scholarship in a way. Like...

Malcolm Collier: Well, you see, quite aside from helping Phil, part of the things that that first year was that we, you know, in the course of the summer, they had put together a set of courses. But you have no materials.

Grace Yoo: Right, there are no materials.

Malcolm Collier: You know, you could count the number of books that had been published and Chinese-Americans on one hand and have fingers left over. And they were all out of print in any case, not available. So a lot of that whole first year is, you know, we had a kind of jerry-rigged curriculum to get started, but you had to go back and look at it and decide what makes sense. What do we need to do? How do we need to change or what do we need materials for? How do we read how to redesign the course? Well, to do that, you also have to do the research to find out, well: a) what should be in the course? Can we get the information? How do we get it? How do you put it together into a course? And of course that was the planning group activity. But that's just the top, because each of the groups had their own planning group that was working at that at the lower levels.

Irene Collier: So that was the history. But I felt that, you know, there was a community class, too, that...

Malcolm Collier: That was actually the next year.

Irene Collier: Oh, the next year? Okay.

Grace Yoo: How often did the planning group meet? Every week?

Malcolm Collier: We met every week.

Grace Yoo: For how long?

Malcolm Collier: 3, 4, 5 hours. And that's in addition to each of the area planning groups would also meet each week.

Grace Yoo: Dedication. Yeah. Well, can you describe that dedication you all were experiencing? Because it's like...

Malcolm Collier: We didn't think of it as dedication.

Grace Yoo: What did you think?

Malcolm Collier: Well, it was, this needs to get done.

Irene Collier: And, you know, a lot of it were students, you know, just who had felt the same thing.

Grace Yoo: Did you all feel like you were on, like, this mission to kind of create something that had never existed? And you're like, we're doing something that's so, you know,

Irene Collier: Yeah...

Malcolm Collier: It's nice to be involved in the creation of things.

Irene Collier: And also as a group, too. You don't have that many...

Malcolm Collier: I know that, you know, when we did that *At 40* book. But I talked about it as being collective. We didn't focus on individuals. Partly we didn't want to upset anybody, but also because it really was collective in a way that in many respects, later on, things were not so collective. I mean, there really was a sense of, you know, if somebody couldn't do it something, then somebody else would back them up, take it over. You know, and it's even that was even true during, you know, the strike. But even afterwards, people had to take public positions on things because there's still a lot of conflicts. People like Mason (Wong) would tell us, "Well, if you have to represent us, you take your position, we'll back you up, even if we think you're wrong."

01:05:25 Irene Collier: Yeah, privately, we'll tell you, "You screwed up."

Malcolm Collier: We would back you up. So this was a lot of sense that, you know, you had a lot of autonomy. You could make decisions. You're in the process of working together to do something. And you knew at least within those groups that you would be backed up.

Grace Yoo: So the planning group, so I'm trying to think like a bunch of, like 22-year-olds hanging out and 21-year-olds.

Malcolm Collier: Well, they're not all that young because there were a couple older people who were vets that had come back to school.

Grace Yoo: Oh, that's right, there were a lot of vets too, and we've been hearing about that. I know Mason was a vet. Alfred was a vet.

Malcolm Collier: Alfred was a vet. George was a vet.

Grace Yoo: George was a vet. So the kind of, like, there was a maturity among folks that were leading it. And that's the other interesting thing is because also in the BSU (Black Student Union), there's several vets, too, that are involved.

Malcolm Collier: A lot of them were vets.

Irene Collier: And George had worked as a photographer for Sunset magazine. So he had been out, you know, in... The professional.

Grace Yoo: In the world.

Irene Collier: In the work world before being involved.

Grace Yoo: But I find it interesting that all of you were gathering and the outcome was to create this class. Right. And the materials associated with the class.

Irene Collier: Yeah. Several classes actually.

Malcolm Collier: Many. And we had to totally rewrite the curriculum the first year, you know.

Irene Collier: And then also, I think, you know, the history part was kind of, you know, had its own entity.

Malcolm Collier: It had its own structure.

Irene Collier: You know, the community class later focused on the various agencies and how they address problems. But the one that I thought was brilliant and that was pushed by George, was a Chinese art class. And we thought, "Chinese art?" You know, and everyone said that should be in the Art Department. But no, George felt that there was a need to talk about values and to talk a little bit about our connection to China. And the brilliance of the thinking of those times in setting up the first Chinese-American section. I can't speak for the other ones, but I have to say that they displayed equal amount of insight and brilliance in putting things together. But I know that for this one, you know, people were very puzzled as to why we had a Chinese art class here. But George felt that you needed to get at values. So this is not really an art class. It's a class about values and about how artists in the past have dealt with protest. So, you know, Bill Woo was hired. He came from Dartmouth, I think. And his approach was that, you know, he showed different slides and he showed a picture of an iris, and he said, "You see this beautiful brush painting of an iris?" And he said, "It's a protest painting. Why is this a protest painting?" It looks very classical. Everybody was, is this protest? And it says the iris is shown without any roots. And it was a protest of the artists against the government because he felt that the government was showy and showed just the beautiful flower, but never showed the roots. And so they were things like that that, you know, again hammered at us like, you can't just be a face, you have to be grounded in your community. And so that was the intent of that class. And I think he, the instructor tried very hard, but because he was an expert on Chinese art, it kind of in recent years,

you know, the second year kind of lost its focus and became an art class instead of a values through art and protest through art. And you know, what people have done when they felt that the government was not responding to them.

Malcolm Collier: But even us, just as an art class, he was doing some things that were very important. He was chipping away at stereotypic perceptions of Asian art, stereotypic perceptions of how cultures had evolved and developed in Asia, and stuff like that as well, and how he was doing in some respects with, in many cases with incomplete information that later since then he has been proved correct with archaeological finds. And he would say, well, we don't have the evidence for this, but because of this, this, and this, it must be this way. And he was right. He died very young, unfortunately.

01:10:34 Irene Collier: So, you know, just the whole concept of it, it's almost like designing for a whole person to go out into the community.

Grace Yoo: Such a thoughtful...

Irene Collier: And with deep knowledge.

Malcolm Collier: See, the structure in the thing was you have the history courses to find out well, here's where things were. You had, we hoped - it never really worked - the language courses and that aspect never really came together. But the ideas was to help prepare people to work in the community. You have the identity site type classes which really deal with issues of culture and identity. Okay. And then the fourth component, then of course, you had literature and arts. That was how these reflected and expressed the communities because it always came back to that. And then of course, in the second year, we had all of the community courses which were then linked into that.

Irene Collier: But, you know, it just showed how the original intent of it was very practical. We need workers in the community, we need social workers, we need teachers, we need nurses. We need all kinds of help in the community.

Grace Yoo: Incredibly thoughtful. The curriculum was there designed around the community.

Irene Collier: Right. And that was what the whole reason for existence was to provide help to all the communities, and I think Black Studies was very strong in that, too. And so, you know, and the Filipinos had a Filipino language class. And so, you know, all of it was the intent was there. Yeah. And I think, you know, and I have to say, this is editorializing. I have to say that I'm kind of disappointed because I think in many years subsequent in the last few decades, we've had college professors come through Asian American studies who never had that community focus, who lost sight of that. And for them, it became like, do proper footnotes, be a scholar, you know, learn about people in whichever research design they want, but they focus on only the research and not on the practical value of, you know, making the world better, making our communities better. And that I'm, I have to say, I'm disappointed in Asian American Studies, that it's lost its focus. And when you see workers in the community today, very few are from San Francisco State. And so I'm disappointed

Malcolm Collier: And of course there is, you know, there's a Mexican proverb that translated says, "He who runs with the wolves soon learns how to howl." And the challenge that we've faced over time here is where the department is in an academic setting. The strike said we want

to have an academic unit here. But the purpose of the academic unit is for the community. Well, that's contrary to what the culture of academia is. And so over time, because of the insistence of the university on maintaining its cultural traditions, which include that you're supposed to have a doctorate to have a permanent position to take it. Doctorates are fine. Okay. Means that anybody that gets hires has to go through doctorate program, doctoral programs. Doctoral programs are based on medieval university structures, and they're very good at what they do. They acculturate people into that tradition. Okay. But there's a contradiction between that on a certain level, and what were the aims originally in the strike, which was to have programs that serves the needs of the communities. I mean, I made proposals, some of us made proposals, in the 70s that we should push to have permanent part time positions. That would be you where you would hire people from the community who were working in community agencies, who would then have a permanent base in the university and a part time. And that way you would get community activism permanently in the university. Well, of course, they're never going to go for them, because most people who are active in the community do not have doctorates and are never going to get doctorates, because that's not what you need there.

01:15:15 Irene Collier: Yeah, yeah, but that's a challenge in other departments as well, because the education department, when I was going through it, had practicing teachers teach a lot of the classes, and then (later) it switched to having PhDs teach classes. Well, a lot of the PhDs didn't have (more than) one or 2 or 3 years in the classroom. And maybe they had they taught one grade level. And so they don't have the practical experience that the teachers that I had had, and the education department is one that went all for the PhDs in the EdDs and so did the Journalism department.

Malcolm Collier: That's not quite right...

Irene Collier: Is it?

Malcolm Collier: Journalism, actually, I don't know if they still managed this, but Journalism fought very hard. They said they were being pushed. You have to have higher people with terminal degrees. Sounds like a terminal illness. And the Journalism department fought back. They said we don't want them if they have PhDs, we want people who have worked in the industry. And because they were backed up by the Professional Journalism Association, they were able to hold that line for a while. I don't know if they were able to maintain it forever.

Grace Yoo: So I had a question. So I know, Malcolm, you were involved in helping many of our courses become, enter general education. So as these courses were developed, I was wondering at what point where people's thinking, you know...

Malcolm Collier: Immediately.

Grace Yoo: ... We need to enter all of academia.

Malcolm Collier: We knew right away the courses had to be courses that could be used by the students to meet graduation requirements, not just units, but to meet requirements.

Grace Yoo: So not just a class, but a GE (General Education). But how did you know that? What, who had that forethought?

Malcolm Collier: It came forth very early in the first semester as we were talking in the general planning group. Otherwise the students cannot afford to take the classes they need to take.

Grace Yoo: And did you think it was going to be really easy? Did folks think, oh, this is going to be easy to get through?

Malcolm Collier: Well, actually, it wasn't too hard at that time, fortunately, because of the nature of the academic community at State in the '60s, it had created a circumstance in which was we (now) call general education, was called general studies, where they had a lot of different classes. So our strategy is we would look at, say, what are the courses that meet history requirements? What are the courses to meet literary requirements? They say, here's the description of these courses. Well, we've got a course that does all this. Why can't you accept it? We tried to catch them in their own contradictions and other ones, we tried, we had to learn what the structure was, the process of getting approval and then use it against the university to get the courses into GE. And as you know there's been written around elsewhere. We had some assistance on this one. People in the administration were willing to help, you know.

Grace Yoo: But who were the supporters in the administration?

Malcolm Collier: Well, the big friend was Daniel Feder. But the thing here and we had help from other faculty as well. But the thing is that we had to learn how the university worked in order to survive. And at the end of the first year, Jim Hirabayashi was telling his colleagues in Anthropology, he says, "I have a group of students here who know more about how the university works than all the faculty."

Grace Yoo: But there were allies within the administration and faculty that were wanting to see Ethnic Studies.

Malcolm Collier: Well, they weren't necessarily... Different people had different motivations. I think because the strike was so harsh and so long and so difficult, they didn't, the administration, administrators, did not want to go back to them. And so if we could present a program that was, at least on the surface, was smooth going, met certain requirements, they would give us a lot of leeway. I mean, the whole activity of the planning groups was illegal under the state education code. Yeah. Absolutely illegal. But they gave us as long as we could present an operating system, they would let things be. Now some of them probably thought, well we'll let them do this and then we'll last five years and they'll be gone. We don't have to worry about them anymore.

Irene Collier: I mean, I don't think I think that was the general prevailing. And then all the Asian American Studies and all the classes would be subsumed, the history classes would be...

Malcolm Collier: Just abolished altogether.

Irene Collier: ... just only in the history department. And, you know, then people would get back all that. Because the departments had to give up time to create this. So, it was not...

01:20:10 Grace Yoo: Well, and there's territories. So I thought, you know, as Asian American studies and Ethnic Studies courses start to enter the arts, you know, the art requirement or, you know, or, you know, writing or various departments might be like, that's my territory.

Malcolm Collier: Yeah. But it's also, you know, we haven't talked about Experimental College, but that had created an environment in which at least there was some openness to experimentation.

Irene Collier: But I have to say that, you know, going the general studies requirement route was debated because there was a very big push to have a B.A. very early in Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies.

Malcolm Collier: Black Studies, La Raza Studies early on, went for B.A.'s. American Indian Studies, it wasn't an issue, they're so small. And the thing was they had various reasons for wanting to do that. And there were people in Asian American studies, particularly in the JA group, that wanted to go that way. Okay. Part of it, you know, there's a lot of legitimate reasons for doing that. It gives a certain legitimacy to the program, maybe creates a little more stability within the university environment, things like that. But in both the Filipino and the Chinese American group, we were very iffy on that. And to be fair, it wasn't totally agreed upon in the JA group either. And so we did not go for a B.A., we said we are going to focus on general studies because basically, what does the community need? Does the community need people with a B.A. in Asian American Studies sort of like being stamped AA rice? Or does it need more teachers? More social workers? Does it even need more business folks who are informed and understand the history and the needs of the community? If we want to get as many people exposed and learn from what we're trying to do, then a B.A. is not going to do it because it's only going to be a few people. Okay. If you want to have real impact, we want to have people that are going to go out and become social workers and come out and be teachers come out and for that matter, be bankers, fine.

Irene Collier: And geographers.

Malcolm Collier: You know, but that they have taken these courses, they've been given at least a grounding in the needs of the community, the history of the community and so forth, so that when they're out there and whatever their job is, that they will do a better job at that for the community. So we felt like if we're going to invest energy, that's where we want it to be.

Irene Collier: And the skills from those disciplines were very important. We can't, you know, at that time...

Malcolm Collier: There were almost no Chinese-American teachers in the school district. There were only a handful, probably less than five social workers. So I mean, the need was obvious.

Grace Yoo: Yeah, really responding to needs. Yeah. Wow. All right. It is, uh, about 3:15. I think we're going to wrap up.

Malcolm Collier: Some people had questions.

Yoko April Tamada: Oh, yeah. We've written some other questions.

Sydney Jackson: My question is for you (Irene Collier), like, you talked a little bit about your interracial dating and intercultural differences in the beginning. You talked about how your parents reacted. How did your parents react? You said what would be assumed of them, but what happened? If you feel comfortable.

Grace Yoo: Oh yeah, what happened?

Malcolm Collier: We eloped.

Irene Collier: We, you know, we had to elope. We, they were so upset, and you know, my mother couldn't face the people in her sewing shop for weeks. She just didn't go to work. And my

father didn't speak to us for a year. And so it was just really, really hard. And finally, my brother interceded that. It was devastating for me because I was very close to my parents, and we had done this for the community. And suddenly the community was like, you're out, you know, and so it was just really, really hard. And, you know, the one person that was really of great comfort to me was a woman from Taos Pueblo. You know, when she came to visit, she said, "Irene, it's going to be all right." Because she had married out, and both sides did not want that marriage to take place. And she said it's going to be all right. So that was the first person who said okay. And you know, I can't say that it's over. You know, we've been married over 50 years, and sometimes you go places together. You know, it's still uncomfortable, people still, you know, and it was hard for our children because their name is Collier. They're not visibly Asian. And the first question anybody asked them is we, you know, look Asian. And so if the father had been the Asian, I think it would have been easier because then it's obvious it's a signal.

01:26:00 Malcolm Collier: At least the name.

Irene Collier: And so when our son, you know, his children are Colliers. And so when he had his daughter, he said, "I want a Korean name for her."

Grace Yoo: Oh, interesting. As a signifier, yes.

Irene Collier: Because then it would be a signal that, you know, she's not just White, you know. And so, he said that, you know, all his life, you know, you don't look Asian. You know, all of our children.

Malcolm Collier: Well, you know, and the standard response, even outside of white community sitting with him in a fiesta in Taos sometime after, this elderly couple behind me, "*Ay, mira este Indito tan bonito!*" Look at that pretty Indian boy. Because that was kind of like the default, for both him and one of our daughters. Everybody said they were, you know, American Indian.

Irene Collier: But so, you know, I think you really

Grace Yoo: How did your folks eventually? Did they... They liked Malcolm eventually?

Irene Collier: They liked him as a person, but they're still, you know, and they like the grandkids.

Malcolm Collier: Children can make a big difference.

Grace Yoo. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And Malcolm, you knew you were kind of, as you enter as you, you know, you realized this... Did you kind of realize, wait, you know...

Malcolm Collier: I've spent my life in places where I was not exactly accepted...

Irene Collier: ... welcome.

Malcolm Collier: Or at least not familiar.

Irene Collier: But I have to say, I have to hand it to him that, you know, he took a lot of insults very graciously. And it's not easy for him. And of course, you know, I'm a battle ax...

Malcolm Collier: But, you know, I mean, the thing here is that this isn't about the strike. But, I mean, you know, they show these sorts of things. It's that people like her parents, say that generation, they have a lot of very legitimate reasons to be conservative, okay? And they're not

necessarily reflective of prejudice. Okay. If you're a parent, you obviously have desires for certain things of your values and culture to be maintained on to the next generation. And any kind of out marriage, you know, no matter who it is, is a threat to that. Of course, what they don't realize frequently is that at the same time, the whole culture as a whole is under threat that way. But, you know, here's a very tangible one. And I have to say, a lot of couples don't necessarily handle that that well. I mean, you know, you'd think if someone marries someone from another culture that they're going to be at least somewhat open to it, but it doesn't always work out that way. I mean, we've had some horrible stories we've run into.

Irene Collier: And everybody starts off thinking it's going to be great. Everybody has a...

Grace Yoo: But you both can talk about it. Because I've run into people that can't talk about it. And I think that's where they don't have a language.

Malcolm Collier: See, the thing here is that... Let's just talk about in terms of culture, which is, you know, how do you behave? What are your expectations of people? What are your expectations for the future? How do you raise children, etc.? All of those things. When you're young and you know you first get married, let's say you don't know what your expectations are. Those things, because culture is situational, or you don't know. It doesn't get triggered until you're in that place, you know, and then you get in that place and things are, oh, you want to do it that way? Oh, you know. So the only way to make it work is people have to be flexible. So, you know, and a lot of people don't know how to be culturally flexible. Even with the best of intentions.

Irene Collier: And I have to say, I, you know, I haven't... There are times in that I have not been flexible. You know what? I want things my way, you know. And so, you know, it's hard for any couple.

01:30:00 Malcolm Collier: You know, I mean I used to, we did have a there was a young woman that was working in the programs, the department in the '70s, and she married, what was it? And Italian American? Anyway. And both families had opposed it. Okay. But in any case, they got married, and they had a child and frequently the arrival of a child is both positive and negative. It's positive in that frequently children trigger grandparent behavior. Okay. One, two, children to many people in many cultures means the couple really is a couple. Before that, they're not really a couple. I've had people weigh in on our in our first child. People in New Mexico told me, "Oh, now you're really married." And so that's positive. It triggers a change in the roles and the relationships. But at the same time, some of the deepest expectations about behavior culture supports are embedded in how you raise children, because that's how you transmit, right? And so that's also the point in which there's a lot of danger for potential conflict. In this particular couple, the couple we're talking about, the mother, apparently on arrival of their daughter's child decided she was going to accept the marriage. How do we know that? She cooked some very special dishes that are supposed to be eaten by the mother in the postpartum period? They're expensive to make. They're a lot of work to make. She gets a cousin to drive her down the peninsula to deliver the food to the couple. The husband looks at these pots on his kitchen counter and says, "I don't want my wife taking part in these Chinese superstitions," and put them down in the garbage disposal. I mean, what a disaster! And it's, you know, I mean, it would confirm to the mother of all her worst fears. Okay. It puts the daughter in an impossible position. Okay. And then it's stupid on top of it, because it tastes good!

Grace Yoo: Waste of food!

Irene Collier: You have to be flexible with food.

Grace Yoo: With food, especially. Yeah. That's a, wow. That is,

Irene Collier: I mean, everything. Your language is gone.

Grace Yoo: Food is love.

Irene Collier: You know, your language is the first to go. Your clothes that you wear, you know. But the food survives.

Grace Yoo: Especially at that moment in time. Yeah. That's deep. That's a deep story.

Malcolm Collier: It's complicated.

Grace Yoo: It is complicated. Okay, great.

Yoko April Tamada: Any more questions?

Baligh Ben Talebs: Yeah, kind of just piggybacking off that, I was just curious how your participation in the strike and afterwards affected the way you guys raised your children to, today and the things that you guys missed talking about. How does that play into your family and stuff?

Irene Collier: Well, I think we were very conscious. And, you know, I ran a bilingual preschool. So, both of our daughters became very, very bilingual at the age of five. But then they lost it because the schools, again, were pushing English only. And so, you know, our son didn't really latch on to language as quickly. But, and then later on, I think, you know, they got a lot of dosage of, you know, both my background and his background because we dragged them to school board meetings and they saw us, you know, speaking before the board. And they said, "Oh, gosh."

Malcolm Collier: "Now we know why it's called a bored meeting."

Irene Collier: And every summer we would go to New Mexico, and they run around, you know, the sagebrush. And so, they got a very strong dose of both of our cultures. And also my daughter, my second daughter, well, my older daughter worked at the Asian Art Museum in the education department, and she created a lot of the curriculum for Asian art there. And my second daughter worked with me in creating, I have to show you because I'm very proud of her. And we did a biographies because we felt that we didn't have biographies of Asian Americans. So my second daughter and I did this and, you know, and then, our son is a filmmaker, so he's done various, he's worked on various (Asian American and Asian Canadian) films (both documentary and dramatic.) So, you know, they were exposed to all kinds of things.

Malcolm Collier: And sometimes it's a curse, you know?

Irene Collier: It is. It is a bit of a curse for them. They felt that.

01:35:08 Malcolm Collier: We joke about them being heavily infected with terminal conscientiousness.

Irene Collier: And they feel like they have to work to improve, you know, the world. And so maybe we laid it on a little bit too thick.

Grace Yoo: But you all are grandparents now too. That's exciting!

Irene Collier: And then next generation. Victims, the next set of victims!

Grace Yoo: Other questions?

Yoko April Tamada: No, I don't have any questions.

Grace Yoo: Oh, okay. Sydney?

Sydney Jackson: Oh, yes. Sorry. One last one. Is it bilingual? Were you teaching them Spanish? Because I know you speak Spanish, or Spanish and English and also Cantonese, or just Spanish?

Malcolm Collier: Cantonese... Her dialect is a super tonal language. And I do not handle tones well, and so I never got beyond baby talk.

Sydney Jackson: But for your kids?

Irene Collier: He could understand my mother sometimes, you know, when he got, you know, the understanding stage.

Grace Yoo: I mean, sometimes is that good or bad if they were kind of being critical? They would be like...

Malcolm Collier: And of course, the children, our oldest daughter lost a lot of her Cantonese when she went to school at the regular school, but she does speak some Spanish, and she was very good at languages. She would pick things up easily. And so at this point she speaks at least reasonable some Spanish and French, actually. Our son has picked up a certain amount of Korean, which is it's actually a lot easier than Chinese. And then our other daughter, the one that works on this, speaks Spanish and Cantonese.

Irene Collier: You know, her Cantonese is passable, so...

01:37:02 Grace Yoo: Nice, nice.